CLAIMS

I claim:

1.   A selection system for advising a user whether or not to select a
product or service, including a processing unit comprising a product or service database
including product and/or service data on a plurality of products or services, selection
means for selecting a particular product or service listed in the database, and remote
user means operable by a user for identifying a product or service and for indicating to
the user the suitability of the product or service on the basis of one or more
predetermined user preferences, the remote user means including transmitting means
operable to transmit at least the product or service identifier to the processing unit for
processing therein.

2.   A selection system according to claim 1, wherein substantially all
processing of data is carried out in the processing unit.

3.   A selection system according to claim 1, wherein the processing
means includes database management means operable to generate a sub-database
specific to each user using the system.

4.   A selection system according to claim 3, wherein the sub-database is
permanent.

5.   A selection system according to claim 3, wherein the sub-database is
temporary.

6.   A selection system according to claim 1, including means operable to
transmit from the remote user unit a user identification each time a product identifier is
transmitted.

7.   A selection system according to claim 1, including means operable to
transmit a remote unit identifier and means operable to correlate the remote unit
identifier with a user identifier.

8.   A selection system according to claim 1, wherein the product or service data includes predetermined characteristics of each product or service, one or more of said characteristics being unrelated to the content of a product or service.

9.   A selection system according to claim 7, wherein the product characteristics include one or more of: method of treatment or manufacture, distance product has travelled from origin, place of origin, politics of region of origin, type of labour used in manufacture or production, details of manufacturer or supplier, health risks, public health warnings associated with the product, special offers.

10.   A selection system according to claim 1, wherein the remote user unit includes barcode reading means for identifying a selected product from a barcode thereon and/or reading means for reading a product identifier other than a barcode.

11.   A user portable device for advising a user whether or not to select a product or service, including identifying means for identifying a product or service to be tested, and transmitting means for transmitting to a remote processing unit the product or service identifier and either an identifier related to the portable device or to the user of the portable device.

12.   A selection system for advising a user whether or not to select a service, including a processing unit comprising a service database including service data on a plurality of services, selection means for selecting a particular service listed in the database, and user means operable by a user for identifying a service and for indicating to the user the suitability of the service on the basis of one or more predetermined user preferences.

13.   A selection system according to claim 12, wherein the predetermined user preferences include one or more preferences not based upon the terms of the service itself.

14.   A selection system according to claim 12, wherein the service database includes data on the service provider and the user preferences are indicative of the nature of the service provider.